



DAVIS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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News Release

Health Department's Emergency Planning Involves External Resources

(Farmington, Utah) – On Tuesday, May 16, the Davis County Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints allowing the county's health department access to the church's multiple facilities located throughout Davis County for emergency healthcare response during a crisis. The use of these facilities would permit healthcare professionals and volunteer staff to provide medication or vaccine quickly to county residents during a public health emergency.

Lewis Garrett, director of the Davis County Health Department, has been working with his senior staff members planning the best way of administering vaccinations or medications to the county's growing population of 280,000 people if a public health crisis arose. The Davis County Board of Health's new chairman, Ronald B. Garrison, proposed an innovative approach to this need. He suggested the health department formally tap into the vast infrastructure and volunteer support available within the LDS church's network of emergency preparedness capabilities already located within the county's borders.

"The infrastructure, organized efforts, and volunteer network already exist to get this endeavor going in short order," said Garrison. "Based upon lessons-learned from federal and states' response available within the first weeks after Hurricane Katrina, we found out that we need to be ready to take action locally. Our goal is to allow each local community to take care of all their community members as quickly and as compassionately as possible."

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Garrison continued, “Using these easily identifiable locations that are close to home will eliminate traffic congestion, parking hassles, and long waiting times in a neighborhood setting allowing many people walk-able access.” The concept of neighbor helping neighbor is what this is all about, he said.

Although the health department has started working with the LDS church initially, Garrett extends an open invitation to all other faith-based or volunteer organizations to become part of this medical emergency response effort. “The idea is to have locally trained and organized residents of Davis County ready to respond should circumstances arise such as an earthquake, a pandemic influenza, or other public health emergency,” said Garrett. “We’re in the process of starting a Medical Reserve Corps throughout the county to pre-identify current and retired healthcare professionals to volunteer should a disaster occur.”

According to Garrett, reaching out to community-based associations makes sense purely from an organizational and logistical standpoint. “Our health department staff of approximately 160 people is charged with providing mass vaccinations or mass distribution of antibiotics during certain health-related emergencies. The only way we can ever hope to serve the more than a quarter million people in Davis County during such an emergency is through already trained and equipped volunteer organizations and individuals.”

“I welcome all organizations and groups of volunteers willing to commit people or infrastructure to join us now as we work together to keep Davis County healthy in the face of a widespread disaster or crisis,” Garrett said.

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